

STATE OF MICHIGAN



JOHN ENGLER, Governor

FAMILY INDEPENDENCE AGENCY

235 S GRAND AVE, PO BOX 30037, LANSING MI 48909

DOUGLAS E. HOWARD, Director

May 8, 2002

The Honorable Mike Goschka, Chair
Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on FIA
Michigan State Senate
State Capitol
Lansing, MI 48933

Dear Senator Goschka:

This report fulfills the requirement in Section 662 of P.A. 82 of 2001, which directs the Family Independence Agency (FIA) to report on any current or new programs and policies and all initiatives aimed at removing the barriers to achieving self-sufficiency.

New Policies

Several policy changes supporting self-sufficiency were implemented April 1, 2002, pursuant to P.A. 280 of 1939, as amended in 2001. These include:

- Increase in required participation hours for mandatory Work First participants up to 40 hours/week.
- Change in employment and training sanction policy. The old policy was 4 months of 25% reduction in the FIP payment standard, followed by termination of FIP benefits. The new policy is termination of FIP benefits, for a minimum of 1 month, following 10 days for good cause determination and 10-day negative action period.
- Elimination of automatic deferral for parent/caretaker of a disabled child. Between April and October, FIA workers will assess each of these customers to determine the extent to which they can participate in Work First activities, and make referrals as appropriate. In October, the same policy will apply to caretakers of disabled spouses, as well as disabled individuals.
- The length of the compliance test, required to regain eligibility following FIP termination for noncompliance, was increased from 10 to 40 hours. This will ensure customers are serious about WF participation, as well as allow MWA and FIA staff time to work with the customer to resolve barriers to participation.

New Program

- Encouraging Family Formation: In five pilot sites, unmarried TANF mothers who are deferred from Work First for 12 weeks are required to attend parenting/relationship classes during weeks 7-12 of their deferral. The fathers of these children are also encouraged to attend the classes, as are other unmarried new parents. The five pilot sites are: Charlevoix/Emmet, Genesee, Kent, and Berrien Counties, and four district offices in Wayne County: Fullerton/Jeffries, Hamtramck, Maddelein/Gratiot, and Schoolcraft/Stansbury.

The curricula to be covered include creating a stable family, parenting skills, communications skills, health issues, budgeting, and career planning. We plan to evaluate whether these parenting classes increase the likelihood that fathers stay involved with their children and that couples maintain their relationship and move toward marriage.

Current Programs and Policies

The following programs and activities support our Work First efforts:

- **Employment Support Services** provided through the Michigan Works! Agencies (MWAs) and FIA offices include transportation assistance, pre-employment medical exams, relocation expenses, special clothing, enhanced child care referrals, and work-related expenses, including license fees and professional tools.
- **Family Support Services** provided by FIA, include FIA parenting classes, time-management classes, money management classes, and counseling.
- **Prevention Services for Families (PSF)** - In October 2001, responsibility for this program was transferred from specialized Prevention workers to Family Independence Specialists (FIS). The integration of services promotes a family-focused concept, integrating a full range of case management functions into the FIS position and allows for an integrated services plan addressing all family strengths and barriers.
- **Individual Development Accounts (IDAs)** - TANF and private funds are used to support Michigan's IDA program which matches three dollars for every dollar saved by a qualifying member toward the purchase of a home and two dollars for every dollar saved for higher education or business capitalization.
- **Fatherhood Initiatives -**

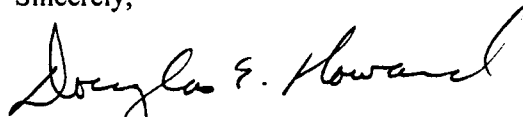
The Hospital Paternity Acknowledgment Program: The Department of Community Health and FIA provide training, technical assistance, and public information for birthing hospitals. The FIA Office of Child Support continues to establish collaborative arrangements with various organizations in providing paternity information to unwed parents, especially to the mother during her pregnancy.

The Fatherhood is Forever Campaign: A partnership between the Detroit Lions and the Office of Child Support, the first of its kind in the nation, began in 1995. The goal is to convey to young people the importance of family life and to encourage fathers, whether married, divorced or single, to become involved in their children's lives.

Teen Parent Program: Operating in 20 counties, this program ensures that teen parents receive services designed to strengthen their capacity to meet the financial, nutritional, psychological, developmental and general health needs of their children by enhancing the teen parent's self-esteem, skills for personal goal setting, decision making, ability to locate and use community services, and use available support systems.

- **PEER (Positive Education Employment Readiness) Program (Delta, Crawford/Otsego, Wayne County Warren/Connor District)** This parenting skills and career development program for single pregnant women or parents with children under age three offers parenting skills, stress management, child development, healthy relationships, nutrition, budgeting, and employment readiness.

Sincerely,



Douglas E. Howard

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